

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 3361

MADRID ALSO FOR AMBASSADOR CARLUCCI

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: POLITICAL TENSIONS AGAIN RISING

REFS: (A) LISBON 3249, (B) LISBON 2989, (C) LISBON 2600

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SUMMARY: TENSIONS ARE INCREASING AGAIN IN LISBON AS A

RESULT OF THE UNDIGESTED ELECTION OUTCOME, PARTY PROBLEMS, ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, AND THE ANGOLA AND AZORES SITUATIONS. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING A STATEMENT BY COPCON COMMANDER CARVALHO, A PCP CALL FOR POPULAR ASSEMBLIES, THEFT OF ARMY WEAPONS, THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY EDGING INTO CURRENT POLITICS, AND THE FESTERING REPUBLICA AND RENASCENCA CASES, HAVE BEEN THE SYMPTOMS OF THE TENSION. THE AFM WOULD LIKE TO DOWNGRADE OR ABOLISH THE PARTIES BUT IS RESTRAINED BY ITS OWN DIVISIONS AND BY THE FEAR THAT EUROPE AND THE U.S. WILL CUT PORTUGAL OFF ECONOMICALLY OR EVEN MOVE DIRECTLY AGAINST THE GOP. THE LIKELY OUTCOME OF THE CURRENT SITUATION, ALTHOUGH FAR FROM CERTAIN IN THIS FLUID POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT IS A FURTHER MOVE TO THE LEFT, A DIMINUTION OF THE PARTIES' ROLE, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP CHANGES. END SUMMARY

1. PORTUGAL'S ON AGAIN OFF AGAIN POLITICAL CRISIS IS ON AGAIN. THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL ALONG WITH OTHER LEADING MEMBERS OF THE AFM, HAS BEEN IN ALMOST CONSTANT SESSION SINCE JUNE 13. THE WEEKEND'S MEETING IS STILL GOING ON AS OF MONDAY, JUNE 16, AS PORTUGAL'S MILITARY RULERS SEEK TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE COUNTRY'S MOUNTING PROBLEMS. THESE PROBLEMS HAVE HEIGHTENED DIVISIONS WITHIN THE AFM; TEMPERERS ARE SHORT; RADICAL SOLUTIONS TO "SAVE THE REVOLUTION" ARE CONSTANTLY DISCUSSED; A CONTINUED THEME, HOWEVER, IS RENEWED CRITICISM OF THE CIVILIAN POLITICAL PARTIES WHOSE FUTURE APPEARS DIM.

2. BACKGROUND TO CURRENT CRISIS: AS ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE PORTUGAL HAS BEEN IN A STATE OF SEMI-PERMANENT CRISIS FOR THE LAST SIX WEEKS. THE CAUSES ARE VARIED AND THESE INTER-LOCKING CRISES HAVE CAUSED THE GOVERNMENTAL MACHINERY (OR WHAT PASSES FOR IT IN REVOLUTIONARY PORTUGAL) TO DETERIORATE EVEN FURTHER. THE PRINCIPAL FACTORS IN THE CURRENT SITUATION ARE:

-- THE ELECTION OUTCOME: THE ELECTION POSED THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL LEGITIMACY. IS PORTUGAL TO BE RULED BY THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE AS EXPRESSED IN THE ELECTIONS OR BY "REVOLUTIONARY LEGITIMACY" AS EMBODIED BY THE AFM AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, INTERPRETED BY THE AFM? THIS DICHOTOMY IS YET TO BE RESOLVED.

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-- PARTY PROBLEMS: STEMMING FROM THE ELECTION CAME PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND THE AFM. THE COMMUNIST POWER PLAY AGAINST THE SOCIALISTS ON MAY DAY, FOLLOWED BY THE PCP-INSPIRED CLOSURE OF "REPUBLICA," GENERATED TENSION. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THESE PROBLEMS, WITHIN THE MILITARY THEY GENERATED FURTHER DISTRUST AND DISGUST WITH "PARTISAN SQUABBLING."

-- GROWING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS: RUMORED FOOD SHORTAGES,

UNEMPLOYMENT, GENERAL DROP IN MORALE, AND REPEATED AFM CALLS FOR AUSTERITY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO CONSIDERABLE UNHAPPINESS IN ALL STRATA OF THE SOCIETY.

-- ANGOLA AND THE AZORES: THE LOOMING DECOLONIZATION DISASTER IN ANGOLA AND THE RECENT SEPARATIST FLARE UP IN THE AZORES ARE CONVINCING THE AFM THAT THEIR PROBLEMS ARE BE NO MEANS LIMITED TO METROPOLITAN PORTUGAL. THE RECENT REFUSAL OF PORTUGUESE TROOPS TO EMBARK FOR ANGOLA WAS NOT TOTALLY UNEXPECTED BUT NEVERTHELESS A SHOCK.

-- NATO'S MESSAGE TO GONCALVES: THE PRIME MINISTER RETURNED FROM THE NATO SUMMIT WITH LESS THAN GOOD NEWS AS FAR AS THE AFM WAS CONCERNED. HIS MISSION HAD BEEN TO REASSURE THE ALLIES AND THIS HE HAD NOT DONE. WHILE MANY IN THE AFM ARE LUKEWARM AT BEST ABOUT NATO, THEY ARE NOT LOOKING FOR PROBLEMS WITH NATO AND THEY FEEL THAT THE GONCALVES VISIT DID NOT HELP THEM IN THIS AREA.

3. AFM LEADERS ARE CONFUSED, DIVIDED, AND ANGRY. THEIR REVOLUTION HAS CLEARLY RUN OUT OF STEAM; ITS LOSS OF MOMENTUM AND POPULARITY ARE EVIDENT. THE PROBLEM FACING THEM IS WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT? AS IT HAS BEEN FOR THE LAST SIX WEEKS, THE MOST ATTRACTIVE SOLUTION IS SOMEHOW TO PUSH THE PARTIES ASIDE AND ESTABLISH PURE MILITARY RULE IN PORTUGAL.

4. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: AS TENSIONS ROSE AGAIN OVER THIS PAST WEEKEND, THESE WERE THE MAJOR INDICATORS.

-- OTELO STATEMENT: IN IMPROVISED REMARKS ON JUNE 14, COPCON LEADER GENERAL OTELO CARVALHO CONFIRMED WHAT EVERYBODY KNEW, NAMELY THAT THE POLITICAL SITUATION WAS CONFUSED AND UNSTABLE; THAT THE ECONOMY WAS BAD; AND THAT THE AFM WAS BEING BLAMED FOR ALL THE COUNTRY'S TROUBLES. (SEE FBIS.) CARVALHO HIMSELF PLACED THE BALME ON POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTIES AND THEIR LEADERS, AND ADDED THAT TOO MUCH WAS EXPECTED TOO SOON OF THE AFM. HE WONDERED OUT LOUD WHETHER IT MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN BETTER IN APRIL 1974 TO HAVE SHOT A FEW THOUSAND "COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARIES" AND HAVE DONE WITH THEM THEN AND THERE. ASIDE FROM ITS TONE, WHICH MIXED SELF-PITY WITH VAGUE THREATS, CARVALHO'S STATEMENT OFFERED NO SOLUTION TO THE PORTUGUESE CRISIS EXCEPT THE HOPE THAT THINGS MIGHT CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

-- COMMUNIST PARTY DECLARATION: IN A JUNE 13 ANALYSIS OF CURRENT CRISIS THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE PCP ALLEGED THAT "REACTION" WAS AGAIN ON THE MARCH AND PCP PROPOSED THAT "POPULAR ASSEMBLIES" MADE UP OF THE WORKING MASSES SHOULD BE TRANSFORMED INTO "PERMANENT ORGANS OF PEOPLES INTERVENTION IN THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS." THE FUNCTION OF THESE "UNITARY WORKERS ORGANISM" WOULD BE TO WORK WITH

THE AFM AND ASSURE "VIGILANCE IN THE FACE OF SABOTAGE AND COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY FORCES." ALTHOUGH THE DECLARATION DID NOT MENTION ARMING THE WORKERS, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S NOTE PROBABLY CAME CLOSE TO THAT AND SHOULD BE READ AS AN APPEAL FOR SUCH ACTION. THIS STATEMENT CONTINUES THE PCP STRATEGY OF STAYING IN CLOSE STEP WITH THE AFM WHILE ATTEMPTING TO CARVE OUT A ROLE FOR THE PCP SHOULD THE AFM DECIDE TO ELIMINATE PARTIES FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

-- FELLOW-TRAVELER COMMENTS; FSP LEADER, COMMUNIST-FRONTING MANUEL SERRA ON JUNE 14 OPENLY CALLED FOR AN END TO THE FOUR PARTY COALITION GOVERNMENT, AND THE FORMATION OF A "NON-PARTY" GOVERNMENT. ADDITIONALLY, SERRA SAID THAT THE MODERATE NEWSPAPERS "EXPRESSO" AND "JORNAL NOVO" SHOULD BE ABOLISHED FORTHWITH AS COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY.
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LISBON 3361

MADRID ALSO FOR AMBASSADOR CARLUCCI

-- CRT STATEMENT: LEADERS OF PCP-INFILTRATED WORKERS, SOLDIERS, AND SAILORS COUNCILS MET IN LISBON AND ISSUED NOTE PUBLISHED JUNE 16. NOTE CALLED FOR "NON-PARTY" RULE BY THE MILITARY TO "ADVANCE THE REVOLUTION." ADDITIONALLY, THE NOTE CALLED FOR THE CREATION OF "REVOLUTIONARY COUNCILS" IN NEIGHBORHOODS AND PLACES OF WORK.
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THESE COUNCILS ACCORDING TO THE NOTE WERE TO FORM BASIS OF A PEOPLE'S ARMY AND ARMS SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED TO THEM. THE NOTE CALLED FOR A RALLY IN LISBON ON JUNE 17 IN SUPPORT OF THESE DEMANDS.

-- SECURITY CLIMATE: ADDED TO THE GENERAL TENSION AND UNCERTAINTY, PERSONS UNKNOWN RAIDED A MILITARY BASE NEAR ABRANTES (65 MILES NORTHEAST OF LISBON) JUNE 15. THE ASSAILANTS GOT AWAY WITH RIFLES AND SUBMACHINE GUNS AND HAVE NOT BEEN CAUGHT. ROAD BLOCKS WERE THROWN UP ALL OVER THE COUNTRY YESTERDAY BY COPCON SEARCHING FOR THE WEAPONS. NOBODY KNOWS WHO STOLE THESE ARMS, BUT THE AFM ASSUMPTION IS THAT IT WAS COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARIES, AND THIS IS HEIGHTENING THEIR NERVOUSNESS AND CONCERN.

-- REPUBLICA/RENASCENCA: REPUBLICA IS STILL CLOSED. IT WAS TO HAVE RE-OPENED ON JUNE 13. AT LAST MOMENT COPCON DID NOT DO SO AND SAID IT WOULD RE-OPEN TODAY (JUNE 16). THIS PROBLEM, WITH ITS CLEAR IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE OF SOCIALIST PARTY AND FREEDOM OF OPINION, IS FAR FROM RESOLVED. IN ADDITION, IMMINENT CHURCH-STATE SPLIT OCCASIONED BY WORKERS' TAKEOVER OF CATHOLIC "RENASCENCA" STATION IS ALSO UNRESOLVED.

-- CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY: THE LEFT AND THE AFM FEAR THAT THE ASSEMBLY, DESPITE ITS LIMITED ROLE MAY EXCEED ITS BOUNDS, AND JUMP INTO THE DAILY POLITICAL ARENA. THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT HAS BEEN PROPOSED BY THE PPD AND PS, WHO WANT TO SET ASIDE AN HOUR A DAY FOR DISCUSSION OF TOPICS OF NATIONAL CONCERN.

5. LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS AND TENSIONS: THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IS ALSO CAUSING RELATIONS AMONG THE AFM LEADERS TO DETERIORATE. COLLEGIALLY, AN UNUSUAL HALLMARK OF THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT THUS FAR, IS BADLY STRAINED (REF A). THE LEADERSHIP SITUATION IS NOT COMPLETELY CLEAR; ALLIANCES ARE SHIFTING AND FRAGILE; AND THEY ARE SUBJECT

TO THE VICISSITUDES OF THE MOMENT. AT PRESENT WE BELIEVE THE SITUATION IS THIS: ON THE LEFT, ADMIRAL ROSA COUTINHO AND GENERAL OTELO CARVALHO APPEAR TO BE RANGED ON ONE SIDE AGAINST OTHERS LED BY PRIME MINISTER VASCO GONCALVES. ESSENTIALLY, THIS DIVISION PUTS THE LEFTIST NATIONALISTS (ROSA COUTINHO ET AL) AGAINST THE PRO-SOVIET FACTION LED BY GONCALVES. GONCALVES'S OWN POSITION CONTINUES TO BE DECISIVE-- HE IS IN TROUBLE BECAUSE THE ECONOMY HAS BEEN HIS TO MANAGE
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AND THIS HAS OBVIOUSLY NOT GONE WELL.

6. ALL OF THE LEADERS, HOWEVER, ARE VULNERABLE IN SOME DEGREE. FOR EXAMPLE, ROSA COUTINHO IS VULNERABLE BECAUSE OF THE ANGOLAN FIASCO. IN THIS CONNECTION ADMIRAL CRESPO'S JUNE 28 RETURN FROM MOZAMBIQUE IS IMPORTANT. CRESPO WILL RE-INFORCE THE "EUROPEAN" FACTION OF MELO ANTUNES. CRESPO, A MAN OF ACTION, IS SAID TO NICELY COMPLEMENT ANTUNES MORE INTELLECTUAL ROLE AS A POTENTIAL LEADER OF THE MODERATES WITHIN THE RC. MODERATES ARE STILL IN THE MINORITY ON THE RC, BUT WE BELIEVE THEY ARE MAKING A COMEBACK. NOR IS OTELO CARVALHO COMFORTABLE AT THE MOMENT. HIS COPCON TROOPS HAVE COME, AND ARE COMING, UNDER INCREASING CRITICISM FROM LEFT AND RIGHT OVER THEIR MANNER OF ENFORCING SECURITY AND PUBLIC ORDER. SOME MEMBERS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL SIMPLY DISLIKE OTELO FOR HIS OUTSPOKENNESS AND HEADLINE HUNTING TACTICS. MEANWHILE, BACK IN BUCHAREST, PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES HAS BEEN MEETING WITH ROMANIAN LEADERS. COSTA GOMES IS AT PRESENT THE ABSENTEE LANDLORD OF THIS RAMSHACKLE AND RAMBUNCTIOUS ESTABLISHMENT. HIS RETURN TO LISBON, ON JUNE 16 MAY SERVE TO CALM HIS COLLEAGUES. BUT IF HE CAN RESTORE CALM AND A SEMBLANCE OF UNITY TO THE AFM LEADERSHIP IT WILL NOT LAST FOR LONG BECAUSE THEIR PROBLEMS WILL NOT GO AWAY.

7. WHAT IS TO BE DONE? THE RADICAL LEFTIST SOLUTION TO THIS IMPASSE WOULD BE TO ABOLISH OR OTHERWISE DOWNGRADE THE PARTIES; ESTABLISH DIRECT MILITARY RULE; RELY ON "NON-PARTY," FELLOW-TRAVELLING TECHNICIANS AS ADVISORS TO A MILITARY GOVERNMENT; CONTINUE NATIONALIZATIONS, STEP UP AGRARIAN REFORM; INCREASE AGIT-PROP ACTIVITIES; AND FURTHER CONSTRICT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. THE PCP HAS SOUGHT TO POSITION ITSELF IN THIS GENERAL AREA BY STATING THAT A MILITARY GOVERNMENT IS ACCEPTABLE PROVIDED THERE IS A PLACE IN IT FOR COMMUNIST ACTIVITISTS, OUTSIDE THEIR FORMAL PARTY STRUCTURE.

8. THIS, HOWEVER, IS PROBABLY TOO MUCH FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL TO ACCEPT EVEN NOW. MOREOVER, THE SITUATION IS CONFUSED BY PERSONAL RIVALRIES WITHIN THE AFM AND RESIDUAL AFM RELUCTANCE TO SET UP AN OVERT MILITARY DICTATORSHIP.

AS A RESULT OF THE TRIPS OF COSTA GOMES AND GONCALVES
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TO EUROPE AND THE VISIT HERE OF THE EC PRESIDENT, THE
LEADERSHIP HAS GOTTEN A CLEAR MESSAGE FROM THE EUROPEANS:
NO DEMOCRACY, NO ECONOMIC AID. WORSE YET, THE AFM FEARS
A DIRECT INTERVENTION SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPEANS OR BY THE
U.S.--PERHAPS THROUGH SPAIN. THUS, THE AFM FINDS ITSELF
CONSTRAINED IN HOW FAR IT CAN GO.

9. A PRIME TARGET FOR THE AFM LEFT IS SOARES AND HIS
SOCIALISTS. NOT ONLY IS SOARES PERSONALLY DISLIKED BY
ADMIRAL COUTINHO AND THE PRIME MINISTER BUT THE PS HAS BEEN
THE PESKIEST CRITIC OF THE AFM AND THE GOVERNMENT. THE AFM
IS FOND OF ACCUSING THE SOCIALISTS, WITH THEIR STRONG EUROPEAN
CONNECTION, OF BEING SOMEHOW A NON-PORTUGUESE PARTY. SO FAR
THE RADICAL AFM GROUP HAS NOT DARED MOVE AGAINST THE PS.
THEY MAY, NEVERTHELESS, DO SO, EITHER THROUGH MISCALCULATION
OR IN THE BELIEF THAT THEY CAN WEATHER THE STORM FROM THE WEST.

10. THE OUTLOOK IS FOR A LIMITED MOVE TO THE LEFT; DIMINUTION
OF THE CIVILIAN POLITICAL ROLE; AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY THE
POSSIBILITY OF HIGH-LEVEL LEADERSHIP CHANGES. THE SITUATION
IS EXTREMELY FLUID, HOWEVER, EVEN FOR PORTUGAL AND THE PERSONNEL
CHANGES WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY DETERMINE WHATEVER ELSE HAPPENS.
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